Lazy visual shorthand undermines health debate

17/06/2025 by Laura Emson

Campaign



CAMRA national director Laura Emson (pictured) has written to the Guardian following its story which used a picture of pints in a pub to illustrate an article on alcohol-related harm, attacking news outlets which repeatedly use images of pubs in negative stories instead of cheap supermarket booze.   Pubs are regulated, community-focused spaces, not the root cause of alcohol misuse. Lazy visual shorthand misleads and undermines any real public health debate, and coverage like this risks stigmatising the millions who enjoy a pint responsibly and support their local pub, social club or brewery.   CAMRA thinks journalists should do better when reporting on alcohol. Visiting the pub has well-documented social and wellbeing benefits, even if you’re not drinking alcohol. It’s especially unhelpful when pubs are already closing at an alarming rate.

Her letter is below:

“Why are you still using the images of people drinking socially to illustrate articles about the harm of alcohol?   “Firstly, the pub is a social hub and provides many benefits, including employment and significant taxes to the public purse, all the while doing less harm than the alternative – slabs of strong beer sold by supermarkets reclaiming VAT and other ways to artificially reduce the price.   “You also do not know that the drinks being drunk even contain alcohol. Low and no alcohol drinks are the fastest growth area of the sector and could easily be in those glasses.   “Yes, look at the health ramifications but don't make it about pubs. They are more part of the solution than they are the problem.   "Make your sub-editors do a better job and stop being so lazy.”   Laura is chair of CAMRA's Member and Volunteer Experience Committee and a freelance consultant to the beer industry.   You can read the original Guardian article here.